

PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFICATION, LOCATION, OFFER OF SERVICES TO NON-RESIDENT PARENTS/FATHERS

Introduction:

MN. Statute 260C.212, sub. 4 requires identification, location, and an offer of services, where appropriate, to both parents of a child. An assessment is required to determine whether or not to offer services and whether or not the parent can provide day-to-day care for the child. The assessment requirement is of the parent's ability to provide day-to-day care and should be directed at determining whether or not the child will be safe with the parent and receive minimally adequate care from the parent. The assessment should also evaluate the extended family system of the non-resident parent and how it may be a safety resource for the child.

Policy:

Otter Tail County Human Services recognizes the importance of a child's relationship with both mother and father. Research outlines the benefits of a father's involvement in the life of a child and the resources (extended family/kin support) the father/non-resident parent provides to a child. It is imperative that exhaustive efforts be made to identify and engage mothers and fathers throughout the life of a case as a means to increase child safety and well-being.

It is the policy of Otter Tail County Human Services to place children in the least restrictive setting possible to maintain the child's safety and well being. If it is necessary to have a child removed from the home of his custodial parent, every effort will be made to locate the non-custodial parent and have placement occur with that parent.

Procedure:

IDENTIFYING AND LOCATING FATHERS/NON-RESIDENT PARENTS

Voluntary Cases: The custodial parent will be asked for the name, current address, and phone number of the non-resident parent. If the custodial parent is unwilling to provide this information, the worker will have meaningful conversations with the custodial parent throughout the duration of the case about the benefit of having the non-resident parent involved. The role of the non-resident parent will be reassessed at case plan reviews and will be consistent with the safety and permanency needs of the child.

Court Cases: The custodial parent will be asked for the name, current address, and phone number of the non-resident parent. If the custodial parent refuses to provide this information, the worker will request that the court order release of this information. The worker will also attempt to locate the non-resident parent via other resources/technology.

In cases where publication for the non-resident parent is needed, the worker will complete the **Affidavit of Diligent Efforts to Locate Parent and Order for Service by Publication**. This form will be sent to the County Attorney's Office in order to establish the need for publication (Rule 31.02, subd. 3, of the Juvenile Protection Rules).

ASSESSING FATHERS/NON-RESIDENT PARENTS

The expectation is that custodial and non-resident parents will be included in case planning; unless, through the assessment process, there is *substantial* documentation that demonstrates there is a safety issue and/or the non-resident parent's involvement in case planning is contrary to the welfare of the child.

To start the assessment process, the worker will obtain permission from the custodial parent and/or the court to assess the suitability of the non-resident parent in case planning. Once the non-resident parent has been located and permission obtained the worker will contact with the non-resident parent within seven days to schedule a meeting date.

Contact with the non-resident parent will involve a thorough assessment regarding the resources the parent brings to provide support and/or safety to the child(ren). The worker will meet with the non-resident parent face-to-face to gather social history information, assess the conditions of the home, and review the appropriateness of further involvement in case planning. The assessment shall also include consultation with collateral sources (mental health and/or chemical health professionals, legal records, extended family, etc) to evaluate the role the non-resident parent may play in supporting and/or caring for their child(ren).

This assessment process should be completed within 30 days of a worker's first meeting with the non-resident parent. A separate case note entitled "Assessment of Non-Resident Parent" will be entered in SSIS. This case note should document the information gathered during the assessment, identify the outcome of the assessment, and outline the strengths and needs of the non-resident parent. Assuming it is determined that the non-resident parent will be included in case planning, the worker will use the information gathered in the assessment to develop a case plan and, if appropriate, safety plan.

For voluntary cases, the worker **in consultation with the supervisor** may determine that the non-resident parent should not be included in case planning. This decision and rationale for this decision must be clearly documented in case notes.

For court cases, any decision to not include the non-resident parent in case planning would be reviewed and approved by the judge.

ENGAGING FATHERS/NON-RESIDENT PARENTS

In a voluntary case with the approval of the custodial parent, father/non-custodial parent will be included in case planning and safety planning discussions.

In cases where the mother and father reside together, the worker will make every effort to conduct joint and/or individual meetings with the mother and father. Case plans should identify the strengths and needs of each parent.

Workers should be meeting with both mothers and fathers a minimum of one time per month. If visits are less than monthly there should be substantial documentation to support the need for less than monthly face-to-face contact. In cases where monthly face-to-face contact is not possible (i.e. parent lives out of state), the worker will continue to make monthly attempt to contact the father/non-custodial parent via phone and/or correspondence.

For any placement case, an out-of-home placement plan will be developed with the custodial parent from whom the child was removed and, if determined appropriate through the assessment process, the non-resident parent. Visitation plans for the mother and father shall be outlined in the out-of-home placement plan and reviewed with each parent.

Paternity establishment:

If a non-custodial parent expresses a desire to provide day-to-day care of the child but paternity has not been established, Otter Tail County Human Services will require the non adjudicated parent to cooperate with paternity establishment procedures as part of the case plan.

In order to get paternity established, the worker will contact the child support office of the need for paternity testing. The social worker will work with child support on completing the necessary forms and process any needed fees. The social worker is responsible for coordinating DNA testing with the child support worker. The worker will assist with assuring children and parents are available and present for DNA tests.

The social worker may also work with the County Attorney's Office to adjudicate paternity in the CHIPS when looking at the placement of a child with the non-custodial parent. Cooperating with child support may also be ordered by the court in CHIPS matter.

Assessment of suitability of non-resident parent:

The non-resident parent will sign a release of information in order for criminal and child protection background studies to be completed. Placement will not be made with the parent until these are completed and the findings do not appear to present safety issues for the child.

A safety inspection will be done of the parent's home. This inspection will be completed by the social worker using the same form as is used in the licensing of foster families. If the non-custodial parent resides in a different state, the case manager shall make contact with the local social service agency where the non-custodial parent resides and/or ICPC to request a home visit to assess the safety of the household and if needed, a home-study/parenting evaluation.

- 1) If the social worker determines that the non-custodial parent is able and willing to provide day-to-day care for the child and it is determined to be in the child's best interest, this recommendation shall be made to the court at the earliest possible date.
- 2) If it is determined that placement with the non-custodial parent it is not in the child's best interest, a case plan will be developed with that parent and services will be offered. See case plan guidelines.

If search efforts are needed, the worker will document their search efforts on the "**Efforts to Locate the Non Custodial Parent**" form.

In all cases where there is a non-resident parent, the worker will email the Child Support Supervisor and request a "Parent Locator Search". The worker will need to provide the following information:

- Custodial Parents name, date of birth and social security number
- Child's name and date of birth and social security number
- Name of non-resident parent (if known), date of birth (if known) and social security number (if known).

Other technical resources should be used as a means to identify and locate the non-resident parent. The following resources must be documented in the efforts to locate/identify a non-resident parent: SSIS/SWNDX, MAXIS, other parent or relatives, Child Support & Collections, Telephone Directory, Directory Assistance, Reverse Directory, Criminal Check, County Corrections Department, Tribe, relatives, and internet search (Switchboard, Peoplefinder, Yahoo, AT&T White Pages, MSN). Workers will document the search efforts on the **Effort to Locate Non-Resident Parent** form.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is another tool that should be considered when making efforts to identify and/or locate a non-resident parent.

The non-resident parent/father will be entered in SSIS as a client in the corresponding workgroup.

Family Group Decision Making should be explored with the custodial parent and child, if appropriate, as a tool to involve the non-resident parent in case planning discussions. Any time a child enters placement and the anticipated length of placement goes beyond 30 days, the worker will formally discuss with the parents a referral for FGDM. FGDM will be used as a means to identify, locate and engage mothers and fathers and their extended family system in safety and supports planning. In child protection cases, the assessment worker will initiate the referral and coordinate this process with the assigned on-going social worker.

Child(ren) Name: _____

Custodial Parent Name: _____

Non-Resident Parent Name: _____ **DOB:** _____ **Social Security #** _____

EFFORTS TO LOCATE NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT

Resource	Date Checked	Last Address on Record	Explanation of Last Address on Record
SSIS/SWNDX (Social Service Records)			
MAXIS (economic assistance records, GA, MFIP)			
County Parental Fee Unit			
Child Support & Collections			
Telephone Directory			
Directory Assistance			
Reverse Directory			
Criminal Check – MNCIS			
County Corrections Department			
Tribe			
Other Parent			
Relatives (list name of relative and relationship)			
Internet Search			
Other			

Instructions for Completing Efforts to Locate Parent Form

Purpose:

Rule 31.02, subd. 3, of the Juvenile Protection Rules requires that the petitioner file a written statement or affidavit describing the petitioner's unsuccessful efforts to locate the parent or other party before the Court can authorize service by publication. The "Affidavit of Diligent Efforts to Locate Parent" fulfills this requirement. The Affidavit can be completed by the social worker assigned to the case, the investigative social worker if it is a new case, or a case aid who is trained in checking resources.

Helpful materials may be found at your public county law library. For a directory, see <http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/cllppubdir.rtf> . For more information, contact your court administrator or call the Minnesota State Law Library at 651-296-2775.

Instructions:

1. Fill in the case caption, the name of the person completing the Affidavit
2. In Question 2, fill in the full name and birth date of the parent
3. In Question 3, a last known address must be included and it must be checked by phone and/or by mail (Question 4). If it appears that it may be current, personal service must be attempted at this address.
4. In Question 5, each resource should be checked as having been reviewed. The following are guidelines for the resource checks:
 - **SSIS / CSIS:** If there is social service history, check to see if it can lead to the missing parent. Domestic abuse or criminal history should have criminal checks done.
 - **MAXIS:** A check of the economic assistance records should provide an address if the missing parent is receiving public assistance such as GA or MFIP.
 - **Parental Fee Unit:** Request from paternity information. Keep this information in the file so the request is not later duplicated.
 - **Child Support & Collections:** Request the Parent Locator search and a paternity check. Keep this information in the file so the request is not later duplicated.
 - **Telephone Directory:** Check other counties that the missing parent has had a known connection with.
 - **Directory Assistance:** Check the cities that the missing parent has had a known connection with.
 - **Reverse Directory:** Check any known addresses or telephone numbers that are connected with the missing parent to see if the parent is listed.
 - **Criminal Check/MNCIS:** Run a criminal history check (statewide) through the MNCIS system. Check with the County jail.
 - **County Corrections Department:** Call this Department to see if the missing parent has a probation or parole officer assigned, and if so, obtain the address from the probation officer.
 - **TRIBE:** If the missing parent is Native American and the tribe is known, contact the tribal urban representative or tribal social services for a possible address.
 - **Other Parent:** The other parent may know the city or state where the missing parent is living.
 - **Relatives:** Parents of the missing parent often have information.
 - **INTERNET SEARCH:** This is not particularly reliable, but a search using at least one search engine should be done. Search engines include Switchboard, Peoplefinder, Yahoo, IWON, AT&T White Pages, MSN.com white pages. Inform others of internet search engines that you find helpful.
 - **OTHER:** If you have knowledge that the missing parent may be incarcerated, take steps to find out the prison. If it is in Minnesota, try the following web site: <http://www.corr.state.mn.us>, click on "offender

locator.” Most states and the federal prisons have a correctional web site. Any other sources of information should also be noted in this category.

5. If an address shows up on any of your resource checks:
 - You must determine if it is current. This may require checking with current residents at the address, driving by the address to see if it exists or if parent is living there, or other creative means.
 - If it is not a current address, in “Explanation” column, explain how it was determined that the parent does not reside at that address.
 - If an address is or could be current, ask to have personal service attempted at the address.
 - If it cannot be verified whether or not it is current, list it as the “last known address” on paragraph 3 and a copy will be mailed to that address.
6. If this is for court purposes (publication), Sign the Affidavit, but only in the presence of a Notary Public.
7. If for court purposes (publication), the completed and signed Affidavit must be given to Court Administration for review by the judge. If the Judge determines that service by publication is appropriate, the judge will sign the Order for Service by Publication located on page 2.